



Book Review & Resources

Reforming Adult Education through Content and Teaching Approaches

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Green, D. (2014). Unfit to be a slave: A guide to adult education for liberation. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers. ISBN-13: 978-9462099333

Greene's book is divided into eight chapters in which he critically reviews adult education programs. Referring to adult education as a form of literacy, Greene argues that adult education programs have been tools in the hand of capitalism to maintain the capitalistic class division of society, resulting in adult education programs preparing students to be the working poor. Greene contends that adult education replaced slavery in the modern age, and teachers, educators and administrators have been trained to be "gatekeepers" (p. 51). Adult education programs in Greene's view do not allow adult learners to become critical thinkers. Rather than being places where the adult learner develops critical thinking and consciousness to take action to establish greater equality in the society, adult education "shapes and trains the docile and unquestioning workforce" (p. 99). This is a result of being tied in relationship with the private sector. Greene states that "a class of capitalists plays a major role in decision-making about the nature and direction of education in the United States" (p. 50). This group affects "public thinking through advertising and the media and financially support the election of their own loyal representative" (p. 88).

Considering the current state of adult education, Greene advocates for "liberatory education" (p. 46) that creates the conditions under which students develop potential to understand and change their lives and the world" (p. 46). "Domesticating education" (p. 46) or "banking education" (p. 46), on the other hand, sees students as objects, empty vessels, and prepares them to be followers and not leaders. Suggestions on how to change adult education into programs that liberate adult learners and value their knowledge and experience are also discussed in the book. Greene defines science as the systematic pursuit of knowledge, a dialectic referred to as "having the clearest picture or reflection of the natural world, the economy and society" (p. 109). Popular education, understood as "application of science to the methods and content of pedagogy for liberation" (p.112) are tools educators can therefore use to help students realize social change,

consciousness, and social transformation. Using examples of adult literacy programs in countries such as Venezuela and Nicaragua, the author shows that education should lead to liberation through participation in the political and economic life of one's country. The book concludes with a call for "freedom schools" (p. 143) or spaces where we learn from each other and the past using dialogue or reflection to address critical issues in communities and society and take action.

The book is an eye-opener and a must read for all involved and interested in adult education and in education in general. Although, the constant appeal to unionization and references to Karl Marx or Paulo Freire may give the impression that he belongs to a specific side of the American political arena, Greene's over forty years in adult education is put to good use in this book, as the reader is led to critically evaluate school curriculum, adult education, and the purpose of education.



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